

AAP picks Atishi as Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly

● Former Delhi chief minister becomes the first woman to hold the post

New Delhi, Feb 23 (GNS) Aam Aadmi Party legislators unanimously elected former Chief Minister and MLA from Kalkaji constituency Atishi as the Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Delhi Assembly on Sunday. The 43-year-old AAP leader is the first woman to hold the position in the Assembly. She was the only top leader of the party to have registered victory in the recent Assembly elections. After the meeting, Atishi said the people of Delhi had elected AAP to serve in the opposition,

and the party accepted the responsibility with full commitment. "A strong opposition plays a crucial role in democracy, and AAP will ensure that the voices of the people are effectively raised in the Assembly. The BJP made several promises to the people of Delhi, based on which they received the public mandate. As the opposition, it is our duty to ensure that these promises are fulfilled," she said. The first session of the Delhi Assembly will begin on February 24. In the three-day session,

the ruling BJP government has said that pending Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) reports against the performance of the previous AAP government will be tabled in the House.

On the expected tabling of CAG reports, Atishi said it was a routine procedure and that she had sent these reports to the Assembly as CM. Earlier, Atishi's name was proposed by MLA Sanjeev Jha and seconded by legislators Kuldeep Kumar and Jarnail Singh. After the meeting, AAP's

national convener Arvind Kejriwal met all party MLAs and congratulated Atishi on her selection. "AAP will play the role of constructive opposition in the interest of the people of Delhi," Kejriwal said. Party's Delhi chief and former minister Gopal Rai emphasised that Atishi had taken on the responsibility of CM during a challenging time and also served as a minister in the government. "Now she has a dual responsibility. She will safeguard the public welfare initiatives that the AAP government



has implemented, while also ensuring that the BJP fulfils the promises it made to the people of Delhi," Rai said. "I am confident that the BJP will have to implement the promises it made, and at the same time, we will ensure that the work done by the AAP government for the welfare of Delhi people is protected," said Rai.

Restore Jammu and Kashmir statehood: Karan Singh

● Former J&K Governor and former Union minister Karan Singh on Saturday demanded restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir.

"You (the Centre) used to say we (J&K) are the crown of the country.

New Delhi, Feb 23 (GNS) "You (the Centre) used to say we (J&K) are the crown of the country. Now have we fallen below even Himachal and Haryana? We have become a UT? No one can digest this, neither the Dogras nor the Kashmiris," Karan Singh said while talking about his fictional book 'The Temple of Shiva' at an event here.

He said everyone in J&K wanted resumption of statehood. "And they (the Centre) have promised they will give it in due course. They have even told the Supreme Court that they will restore statehood. They have not said clearly when they will do it," Karan Singh said. A

Padma Vibhushan awardee, who also served as the country's ambassador to the US, Karan Singh, said with the Assembly elections having been held in J&K, the Centre should restore the statehood now.

"I must say the elections were fair. Everybody witnessed that. After a long time the elections were free and fair. So that is one good thing that happened," he said. Karan Singh said the election results showed "political divide" was more pronounced between Jammu and Kashmir now. "As expected the National Conference won the majority. All Hindu (majority) seats were won by the BJP. There is a



sort of a clear communal divide, although there is no hostility or tension, but (there is) a political divide between Kashmir and Jammu. It has always been there, but this time it is little more pronounced."

Trump, Musk insulting India again and again, why is our govt silent: Congress

● USAID funding row: Congress leader Jairam Ramesh alleges Elon Musk made a fake claim, Trump got confused between Dhaka and Delhi and the BJP spread the lie further

New Delhi, Feb 23 (GNS) Amid the USAID funding row, the Congress on Sunday accused the BJP of indulging in "anti-national work" by spreading "fake news from America" and asserted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will also have to answer as to why the government was silent when US President Donald Trump and Elon Musk were "insulting" India repeatedly.

The BJP has rejected all such allegations of the Congress and called Rahul Gandhi a "traitor", accusing him of colluding with foreign forces in his bid to weaken India.

Congress general secretary incharge of communication Jairam Ramesh said, "The BJP is a procession of liars and illiterates. The news about USD 21 million, on which the BJP and their bootlickers were jumping on, turned out to be fake. The USD 21 million in 2022 was not for 'voter turnout' in India, but for Bangladesh."

"Elon Musk made a fake claim, Trump got confused between Dhaka and Delhi, Amit Malviya spread the lie further, then the rest of BJP's bootlickers seized on it," he charged. Ever since the Trump administration's DOGE said on February 16 that USAID had cancelled the USD 21 million funding for "voting in India", the BJP has been making fabricated allegations against the Congress, Ramesh said in his post in Hindi on X.

"But now it is coming to light that this entire news is fake. When the money has not even reached India, then what would be the cancellation?" he said. The controversy is actually about two USAID grants on



DOGE's list that were given through the Washington-based Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS), the Congress leader said.

The CEPPS was supposed to receive a total of USD 486 million from USAID, he said, adding that according to DOGE, the funds included USD 22 million for Moldova and USD 21 million for "voter turnout in India", he said.

"The first fund USAID gave to CEPPS for Moldova was in 2016 with the ID AID117LA1600001. But the USAID USD 21 million grant for India marked by DOGE is completely fake. Because it was for Bangladesh, not India," he claimed.

And the reality is that of the USD 21 million earmarked for Bangladesh, USD 13.4 million has already been disbursed before the January 2024 elections, Ramesh said.

"Every federal grant specifies the country in which it is to be used. According to US federal spending, there have been no USAID-funded CEPPS projects in India since 2008. The only ongoing USD 21

million USAID grant to CEPPS, ID 72038822LA00001, was approved in July 2022 for Bangladesh's 'Amar Vote Amar' (My Vote Is Mine)," he pointed out.

"In November 2022, the purpose of the grant was changed to 'USAID's Nagorik Programme'. A USAID official in Dhaka also confirmed this on social media during his US visit in December 2024: 'I manage the USD 21 million CEPPS/Nagorik project funded by USAID'," Ramesh said.

"Now the BJP should just answer this: Why did the BJP spread fake news about India's democracy? Why did the BJP do anti-national work by spreading fake news from America? If the BJP's accusation against India's opposition party over fake news from America is not treason, then what is it?" he asked.

Ramesh said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will also have to answer, Donald Trump and Elon Musk are insulting India again and again, and why is our government silent on this?"

62 crore devotees have visited Maha Kumbh: CM Yogi Adityanath

Agra (Uttar Pradesh), Feb 23 (GNS) Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said that 620 million devotees had visited the Maha Kumbh mela being held at Prayagraj.

Welcoming the guests at the Unicorn Companies Conclave in Agra, CM Yogi said, "I can call it the Unicorn Maha Kumbh of the startup world because, at this time, Maha Kumbh is an attraction for people."

CM Yogi highlighted that such a gathering of people during a specific time period is a "rare" event.

"So far, 62 crore devotees have come to Prayagraj Maha Kumbh... Such a large gathering of people during a specific period is one of the rare events of this century. This tradition of India has given rise to the arrangement of organising these events at four important places in India since ancient times," Yogi said. Meanwhile, the



authorities managing the Maha Kumbh mela have implemented extensive crowd-control measures at Ayodhya Dham Railway Station to ensure smooth management and safety as a huge influx of devotees is expected on upcoming Maha Shivratri festival. Deputy Superintendent of Police Yashwant Singh said that devotees would

only be allowed to go to the platform when the train arrives.

"We have increased alertness ahead of the Maha Kumbh snan on Mahashivratri. Additional security has been deployed here, after which the total number of personnel deployed here is more than 350. Barricading has been done all around.

Shaktikanta Das, who helmed RBI in Covid, is Principal Secy-2 to PM

● Former Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das, who demitted office in December 2024 and headed the central bank during the Covid pandemic, was on Saturday appointed the second Principal Secretary to PM Modi.

New Delhi, Feb 23 (GNS) Former Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das, who demitted office in December 2024 and headed the central bank during the Covid pandemic, was on Saturday appointed the second Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

This will be the first time in the country's history that the Prime Minister will have two Principal Secretaries at the same time. The post was created in 1971 by then PM Indira Gandhi, who named PN Haksar her Principal Secretary. Modi will now have two Odisha-born top advisers in the PMO — Principal Secretary PK Mishra (77), born in Sambalpur, and Principal Secretary-2 Das (68), born in Bhubaneswar. Das, a 1980-batch IAS officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre, was hand-picked to helm the RBI in 2018 post-retirement. The appointment was necessitated

due to the sudden resignation of Urjit Patel. As Das, the first non-economist RBI chief in 28 years, took control of the central bank, sceptics asked how a bureaucrat with an academic background of history (Das is BA history from St Stephen's College, Delhi) would handle currency, that too at a time of strained Centre-RBI ties.

Over the next six years since assumption of charge as the RBI chief on December 12, 2018, Das was to prove his critics wrong. He steered the central bank through Covid-19, two wars and a nagging inflation. All this while Das calmly managed economic growth, liquidity and market stability, and was ranked among the top three central bankers for two years in a row by Global Finance magazine. The magazine also awarded him an A+ rating in its 2024 Central Banker Report Cards. An official or-

der said the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet had approved the appointment of Das as Principal Secretary-2 to the PM with effect from the date he assumed office. Das' tenure would be co-terminus with the term of the Prime Minister or until further orders, whichever was earlier, the order said.

Earlier, as a bureaucrat who spent a long time in the management of economy, Das was Revenue Secretary and Secretary, Economic Affairs. He was a vocal supporter of the controversial 2016 demonetisation move and principal driver of the GST reform that kicked off from July 1, 2017. When announcing his appointment as the RBI chief, late Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had said, "Shaktikanta Das has had an experience of preparing several budgets as Joint Secretary in charge of the government's budget division. He was India's G20 Sherpa



and member, 15th Finance Commission. He has been extremely professional, having worked with many governments and has excelled himself. He has the right credentials for the job." Appointed RBI chief for three years, Das was granted another three-year extension and he proved his mentor Jaitley right. A lesser-known aspect of Das' life is his knowledge of multiple languages,

including Tamil. The image of a stunned Jaitley looking on as Das answered a journalist in fluent Tamil at the 2016 Economic Editors Conference in Delhi remains fresh in several minds. Das had picked up the language as an IAS officer in Tamil Nadu where he served as district magistrate in Dindigul and Kancheepuram, apart from Principal Secretary, Industry.

EDITORIAL

Wisdom is surrounded by negative forces

In the Bhagwad Gita, Arjuna wonders how even the equanimity of men of wisdom and discrimination gets disturbed – so much so that they abandon the path of righteousness. Even hermits who live in seclusion far away from the hustle and bustle of a life full of distractions and challenges, feel inclined to give up the path of renunciation and revert to a life as householder. Arjuna wants to know from Krishna, the real nature of negative forces that torment the minds of human beings and bring about their downfall.

In the Gita's third chapter, verse 36-37, Krishna explains that desire and wrath are two negative forces which are devoid of compassion and are regarded as serpents in the storehouse of knowledge; lustful thoughts occupy their minds as a result of which their equanimity is disturbed. They represent the demonic forces which are strengthened by ignorance and are diametrically opposed to spiritual wisdom and the path of righteousness. Attainment of true knowledge is thus a task of gigantic proportions. Wisdom, howsoever pure it may be, is surrounded by negative forces; as a result, attainment of divine knowledge is rendered virtually very difficult, if not impossible. So, a person desirous of attaining supreme knowledge, should first – by using his power of discrimination and power of will – annihilate the negative forces of maya which are impediments on the spiritual path.

In his commentary on the Gita, Swami Sivananda acknowledges the power of the senses, but says that even more powerful than the senses is the mind; the mind we know is subservient to the superior intelligence which cannot function independent of supreme wisdom, the ultimate Reality. So, the discriminating seeker takes refuge in supreme wisdom through spiritual techniques of yoga and meditation and, over a period of time, succeeds in bringing the mind under control. And once the mind is rendered pure, the home of all sinful actions is demolished. This, in turn, paves the way for the attainment of Self-realisation – the ultimate goal of human life.

Thus, the seeker who succeeds in getting connected with the vast, inner realms of Consciousness, beyond the mind and the senses, through deep meditation, is able to overcome the lower self, the ego, which is the root cause of the arising of desires. When the seeker abides in the state of equality consciousness, the lower forces of attraction and repulsion die a natural death. After having attained the state of supreme wisdom, that is, Self-realisation, the seeker should make all possible efforts to ensure that he remains firmly anchored in that blessed state. Krishna cautions Arjuna in chapter 3, verse 43, that if the seeker does not remain vigilant, there is every possibility of him falling from the lofty state of divine bliss. Swami Sivananda says: "Even though desire is hard to conquer, it is not impossible. The simple and direct method is to appeal to the indwelling divine Presence through prayer and japa."

Without meditation, all medicine is incomplete



Narayan Chandra Biswal

Health is only understood from the innermost being of man, from where his soul is. In this respect, the Hindi word swasthya is really wonderful. The English word health is not the same as swasthya. Health is derived from the word healing. Illness is associated with it; health means healed – one has recovered from illness. Swasthya does not mean that; swasthya means one has settled within oneself, one has reached to the deepest point in oneself. Swasthya, healthy, means one has become rooted in oneself. That is why swasthya is not just health. Actually there is no word in any other language in the world comparable to the word swasthya. All the other languages of the world have words that are synonymous to disease or to no-disease. The

very concept of health we carry is that of no-illness. In reality, having no illness is necessary, but not enough for swasthya. Something more is required, something that is possible from the other end of the pole where our inner being resides. Even if a disease starts from the outside, its vibrations echo all the way to the soul. So, medical science will always remain incomplete without meditation. We will be able to cure the disease but we will not be able to cure the patient. Of course, it is in the interest of the doctors that the patient is not cured, that only the disease is cured and the patient keeps coming back. Disease can also originate from the other end. Actually, because of the state man is in, diseases are already present. There is a lot of tension inside him. No other animal is dis-eased, restless, tense in that manner. No other animal's mind has the idea of "becoming". A

dog is a dog; it does not have to become one. But a man has to become a man, he is not one already. That is why we cannot say to a dog that it is a little less than a dog. All dogs are equally dogs. But in the case of man, we can reasonably say to him that he is a little less than a man. Man is never born in his completeness. That state of incompleteness is his disease. It is not, as we commonly think, that only a poor man is troubled – because of his poverty. What we do not realise is that once he becomes rich, only the level of trouble changes but being troubled remains. The truth is that a poor man never experiences as much anxiety as a rich man – because a poor man has at least a justification for his problems; he is poor. A rich man does not have even that justification; he cannot even pinpoint the reason for his anxiety. And when anxiety is without any apparent cause, it is terrible.

Maha Shivratri & Moksha



Puspamitra Mohapatra

Maha Shivratri is the festival dedicated to Lord Shiva to remind us that Moksha as aim of life through minimalism and penance of self-purification. The festival is an annual auspicious Hindu festival, is being celebrated on the fourteenth day during Krishna Paksha (dark fortnight) of Magha month of lunisolar Hindu calendar. On this day, fasting and meditation on the night Shiva help devotees to follow the path of righteousness and purity or purification of mind from five evils. The message of nightlong festival is for human beings - who are conditioned - the universe is full of unknown, ignorance, darkness, transient, nothingness, void or emptiness. Therefore, ignorance or darkness is to be expelled, the light will manifest. Be ego-free,

be nothing, empty out evils, un-attach to known and transient - enlightenment will manifest. The pious night is meant to revisit the precept of Shiv-Tatv and worship Lord Shiva as well as to reflect the ultimate aim of life as attainment of 'moksha' or emancipation from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Mahashivaratri - It is also called Night of Awakening The day before the Amavasya (new moon) of each lunar month is called shivaratri. It is the day Shiva was married to Parvati. Mahashivaratri marks the night when Lord Shiva performed the 'Tandava'. Among all the shivarathris of the year, the one that falls in the lunar month of Magha in February-March each year is considered to be most auspicious, and is celebrated as Mahashivaratri. Mahashivaratri has many symbolisms and stories attached to it. Among householders, it is considered the night when Shiva married

Parvati. Among the ambitious, Shiva is said to have defeated all his enemies on this day. For spiritual seekers, this is the day when Shiva merged with Mount Kailash. These stories reflect the auspicious nature of this most significant of nights. According to Shaivism, that subscribes to asceticism and minimalism, the five evils or sins that cause worldly delusions and lead us to Karmic bondage and retribution that block the Moksha from the birth-death-rebirth cycles, are as follows. KAMA: Lust, cravings or desires, KRODHA: Anger, revenge feeling, LOBHA: Greed or acquisitiveness, MOHA: Attachment or temptations, MADA: Arrogance, vanity or ego, MATSATYA: Jealousy, envy, gossip, deceit, lies or slander. In short, Shaivism believes in asceticism, selfless service and purification of mind through strict penance and ridding the five evils of the mind to awaken mind.

Meanderings of soul and spiritual progress



Umesh Chandra Patra

The soul meanders on its journey home; we reincarnate in a particular environment to certain parents, and our destiny unfolds based on the samskaras and genetics we have brought from our previous births and the influence of our immediate environment. In our early life we are groomed by family and community, to elevate our consciousness and fulfil the purpose for which we took birth. From childhood, many of us are taught to believe in a god and religious values. We offer worship in the hope that with divine grace we will attain liberation, heaven, or at the very least, escape the clutches of hell. But all these early experiences are only the beginning of our orientation towards spirituality. From this we must evolve to higher and finer levels. Rituals are symbolic; their purpose is to point us in the right direction, so that we evolve beyond them. For example,

the lighting of the deepam inspires us to search for the true inner light, and bowing before a deity during puja teaches us humility and gratitude. But we get carried away by the rituals themselves, and they block our progress rather than furthering it. The fault is in our failure to understand their true purpose. Scriptures tend to emphasise external approaches, but they are simply a means to a loftier end, to lead us inward. External forms of worship are meant to help us move to the next level – to feel the presence of the Ultimate. The next step is to graduate from experiencing the Almighty within, as antaryamin, to the Almighty as sarva-vyapi, all-pervading. Yet at this next step, we may get stuck – we may become addicted to meditation. While it is a big step to move from the external to the internal, it is not the end of the journey! A journey implies dynamism. All rituals, meditations and other practices, are the means to fulfil a higher goal. When the journey is infinite, will the need to adapt to new means

ever stop? The means that were initially helpful in evolving consciousness will later become insufficient, or maybe even counterproductive. Those who have realised the Ultimate describe arriving at a state of effortlessness. With every breath you will be in touch with the Ultimate. All the methods will vanish on their own, when they have served their purpose. When you move from one dimension to another and begin adopting new methods, is it an insult that you leave the previous ones behind? No, just as it is no insult to a ferry when you disembark at the shore after crossing a river and start walking. Even meditative practices are a means to an end. You will know when to shift gears, but you cannot remain addicted to the lower gear. Some level of courage will be required. On reaching the final destination, nothing shall remain wanting. Such a heart longs for nothing, and is always full, overflowing with godliness. Godliness is akin to love. Can there be anything lacking in such a person?

Children's safety via well-being & self-esteem



Jyotiranjana Champatiray

Breaches of children's safety, however, also come from sources of a more 'internal' nature. Low self-esteem and purposelessness are causing an increasing incidence of bullying and mental health issues among young people. This aspect of safety has remained mostly absent from the national debate, yet the growing prevalence of self-harm and even suicide among young people shows that it is at least as pressing a safety concern, if not more so. The 'Blue Whale Game', for instance, has gripped the country's attention. In this horrific

internet-based 'game', participants complete a series of self-harm tasks ultimately culminating in taking their own lives. This has generated much concern about young people's access to the internet. Indeed, many blame the resulting tragedies on the 'perils of technology', with reactions including limiting young people's access to electronic devices – indicating a focus on the 'external' safety factors. To blame these problematic phenomena on technology is to see only part of the problem. The use of such 'games' by children often reflects underlying issues such as excessive pressure, loneliness, or a feeling that their personal problems are not acknowledged. Mental illnesses of many kinds – depression, anxiety and bipolarity – are realities afflicting millions of children,

yet our national discourse tends to stigmatise them. This causes children to hold back from expressing their feelings, bottling them up instead of seeking help, and eventually finding release through means such as this so-called 'game'. As a society, we must therefore work towards destigmatising mental illness by openly accepting it as a fact of many lives. We must understand that these are real illnesses requiring recognition and support, rather than incorrectly perceiving them as problems of attitude which sufferers should simply change. If these illnesses are not viewed as something to be ashamed of, victims will seek support and tragedies will be prevented. Schools must also treat it as part of children's safety to support their personal well-being, self-esteem, and the inculcation

of a sense of purpose in their lives. Many schools have taken positive steps to provide channels of support such as in-house psychological counsellors, and to normalise mental health through assemblies and seminars. But more than that, to increase students' feeling of self-worth schools should create opportunities for them to reflect upon their role in society and the contributions they can make. Their understanding of their own selves and latent capacities can be deepened through guided reflections and open, inclusive discussions, while a sense of purpose is enhanced through participation in activities involving selfless service towards others. This is a cornerstone of their well-being, and therefore of their safety in a holistic sense.

Donald Trump likely to name a loyalist as Pentagon chief after tumultuous first term

Washington, Feb 23 (GNS) President-elect Donald Trump's choice for defence secretary is still up in the air, but it is a sure bet he will look to reshape the Pentagon and pick a loyalist. During his tumultuous first term, five men held the job as Pentagon chief only to resign, be fired or serve briefly as a stopgap. While he has yet to announce a decision, the names of potential Pentagon chiefs stretch from the well-known — such as Rep. Mike Rogers, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee — to an array of former administration loyalists, including retired Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg, who held national security posts during Trump's first term. Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had been floated, but Trump said on social media Saturday that Pompeo would not be join-

ing the new administration. Rep. Michael Waltz of Florida had also been mentioned, but he's now been tapped to be Trump's national security adviser. Some decisions may linger for days as candidates jostle for attention and officials wait for the final results from House races, weighing whether Republican lawmakers can be tapped or if others are a safer pick to avoid a new election for an empty congressional seat. "The choice is going to tell us a lot about how he will deal with the Pentagon," said Mark Cancian, senior adviser with the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a retired Marine colonel. He said someone with a deep military background may not be as dramatic of a change as others who may be viewed as stronger Trump loyalists. With a number of top jobs at the State

Department, National Security Council and Defence Department up for grabs, Trump is expected to lean toward those who back his desire to end US involvement in any wars, use the military to control the U.S-Mexico border and take a hard line on Iran.

The key test, however, will be loyalty and a willingness to do whatever Trump wants, as he seeks to avoid the pushback he got from the Pentagon the first time around. Trump's relationship with his civilian and military leaders during those years was fraught with tension, confusion and frustration, as they struggled to temper or even simply interpret presidential tweets and pronouncements that blindsided them with abrupt policy decisions they weren't prepared to explain or defend.



UK reiterates support for India's permanent UN Security Council seat

London, Feb 23 (GNS) The UK has reiterated its support for India's permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as part of an expansion of the international panel to ensure it can continue to rise to the pressing challenges faced by the world.

In an address to a UN General Assembly plenary in New York on Monday, UK Ambassador to the General Assembly Archie Young reflected upon Prime Minister Keir Starmer's statement at the UNGA back in September calling for the UNSC reforms to ensure the global multilateral system is "more representative and more responsive." Besides India, Young stressed that the UK wanted permanent representation for Africa, Brazil, Germany and Japan.

"The UK believes that a reformed Council, coupled with a collective, renewed commitment to the UN Charter, would strengthen the Council, so it can continue to rise to the challenges the world is facing; that is why we remain a strong supporter of the UN Security Council Reform. The Council must be expanded, to better reflect the world today," said Young. "We continue to support an expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership to a total in the mid-twenties. We want to see permanent African representation,



and permanent seats for Brazil, Germany, India and Japan," he said. Reflecting on the 2023 Security Council reform agenda at the UN General Assembly, Britain's UN representative recalled the perilous and dangerous state of the world at the time and the challenge this posed to the multilateral system.

He noted: "A year later, the situation is even more acute, and the need to strengthen our multilateral system through reform, ever more pressing." "During his address to the UN General Assembly in September, my Prime Minister reflected on the increasingly complex and interconnected challenges the world, and our multilateral systems, are facing," he said. "Conflict touches more countries now than at any time in the his-

tory of the United Nations, exacting a terrible human toll in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, and elsewhere in the world. The Security Council's role — and its responsibility for international peace and security — is as important now as it has ever been," he added.

Young admitted that agreeing on a model of reform for the Security Council will be "difficult" but asserted the importance of tackling the issue. "It is incumbent on all of us to work together, in the spirit of compromise, to deliver the change we know is needed. The UK is committed to doing just that, and we look forward to detailed and constructive discussions in the intergovernmental negotiations, which we hope will move us forward towards text-based negotiations," he added.

35 killed, 43 injured as man rams car into crowd in Chinese city

Beijing, Feb 23 (GNS) Thirty-five people were killed and 43 others injured when a 62-year old man rammed his car into a crowd in China's Zhuhai City on Monday, official media reported on Tuesday. Zhuhai is currently hosting China's prestigious airshow.

The driver, a divorced man identified as Fan, rammed his car at around 7.48 pm on Monday, when citizens were exercising at the sports centre in Zhuhai City, about 2,200 kms south of Beijing, state-run Xinhua news agency quoted Zhuhai public security bureau as saying. He was detained soon after the incident, Xin-



hua said. It was, however, not immediately clear whether it was an accident or an attack. Chinese President Xi Jinping has urged all-out efforts to treat the people injured in the car ramming case and also demanded punishing the per-

petrator in accordance with the law, the Xinhua added. While reports of the incident are widely censored in the official media, videos posted on X showed distressing visuals of bodies lying on the street with people crying for help.

14 soldiers among 27 killed in Pakistan railway station blast



Islamabad/Karachi, Feb 23 (GNS) At least 27 people, including 14 security forces, were killed and 62 others injured on Saturday in a suicide bombing at a railway station in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, officials said.

The explosion ripped through the railway station of the provincial capital Quetta as passengers gathered on the platform before the departure of the Jaffar Express, scheduled to depart for Peshawar at 9 am.

There were around 100 people on the platform when the blast occurred. "So far, we have received 27 bodies and at least 62 people are injured, with some in critical condition," said Dr Wasim Baig of the Quetta Trauma Centre. Dr Arbab Kamran Kasi, Managing Director of the trauma centre, warned that the death toll may

increase since several wounded individuals, aged 20 to 50, remain in critical condition. Quetta Division Commissioner Hamza Shafqaat said it was a suicide attack targeting security forces and civilians were also hit badly. "There are around 14 members of the law enforcement agencies among the dead and dozens more among the wounded," he said.

The suicide bomber had entered the station with luggage, Shafqaat said, adding that was difficult to stop a person coming with an intention to carry out a suicide attack.

Earlier, SSP Operations Muhammad Baloch had also said that initial findings point to a possible suicide bombing. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), an ethnic Baloch separatist group designated as a terrorist organisation, has claimed re-

sponsibility for the attack. The BLA alleges that the federal government exploits Balochistan's resources while neglecting the province's development. However, the federal government dismisses these allegations and claims that foreign powers are manipulating disgruntled elements to perpetrate sabotage.

"All bus stations, public spots have been put on high alert and gatherings discouraged," Shafqaat said. Balochistan Inspector General of Police (IG) Moazzam Ansari said early investigations suggest the terrorists "targeted personnel from the Army Infantry School".

Rescue and law enforcement teams responded immediately, securing the area and transporting the injured and deceased to Civil Hospital Quetta, according to the provincial government spokesperson.

Kremlin denies report claiming Trump, Putin discussed Ukraine war

► US President-elect Donald Trump spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin over the phone and discussed ending the war in Ukraine amongst many other important topics, claimed a media report.

Washington, Feb 23 (GNS) US President-elect Donald Trump spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin over the phone and discussed ending the war in Ukraine amongst many other important topics, claimed a media report.

"The two men discussed the goal of peace on the European continent and Trump expressed an interest in follow-up conversations to discuss 'the resolution of Ukraine's war soon,' one of the people said," The Washington Post said in an exclusive report published on Sunday.

One former US official, who was familiar with the Putin call, said that it was likely that Trump does not want to enter office with a fresh crisis in Ukraine, prompted by Russian escalation, "giving him the incentive to want to keep the war from worsening," the daily said. "During the call, which Trump took from his resort in Florida, he advised the Russian president not to escalate



the war in Ukraine and reminded him of Washington's sizable military presence in Europe, said a person on the condition of anonymity. However, Kremlin spokesman Peskov in Moscow said the Western media reports of the phone call between Putin and Trump are 'un-

true'. "There was no conversation... This is completely untrue; it's pure fiction," Peskov said. Meanwhile, Steven Cheung, Trump's communications director, said he would not comment on the private calls between President-elect Trump and other world leaders.

Kohli hundred pushes Pakistan closer to exit

● India 244 for 4 (Kohli 100*, Iyer 56, Afridi 2-74) beat Pakistan 241 all out (Shakeel 62, Kuldeep 3-40, Hardik 2-31) by six wickets

● He set up India for a semi-final spot and essentially crossed out Pakistan from the 2025 Champions Trophy

Dubai, Feb 23 (GNS) In the biggest match of the year, with his mortality showing more than it ever used to, Virat Kohli proved he's still got it, that maybe, just maybe, the little he's lost isn't going to define him. He ticked off 14,000 runs in ODI cricket, brought up his 51st ODI century, set up India for a semi-final spot and essentially crossed out Pakistan from the 2025 Champions Trophy. The holders and the hosts need other results to go their way to stay alive in the tournament now.

India went into the game as favourites. They were worthy of that seeding, limiting Pakistan to 241 with Hardik Pandya putting in the kind of performance that should make him illegal. An allrounder capable of dismissing the opposition's best batter, and then coming back to take down their top-scorer, isn't just a name on the sheet. He is the secret sauce. And Kuldeep Yadav was the spice.

His left-arm wristspin is so rare and he made it rarer by finding a way to be quick through the air without compromising on turn or accuracy.

So that means unless batters pick him out of the hand, they are always going to be guessing. Three Pakistan batters guessed wrong. All three were end-overs wickets. Pakistan were setting up to explode at the death. Kuldeep just wouldn't let them. The injury hasn't affected his menace.

Pakistan were able to produce moments. Shaheen Shah Afridi sending down a 143kph inswinging yorker to shatter Rohit Sharma's stumps. Abrar Ahmed conjuring a carrom ball from hell to get rid of a rampaging Shubman Gill. But when it came to capitalising on them, they just couldn't. The result was a world champion side that was renowned for pulling games out of the fire now seems to do the first part

right - they definitely got into trouble in Dubai - but the other part, the important part is going so very wrong. Pakistan were 151 for 2 in the 34th over before they were bowled out for 241 with the most inexperienced member of the India side dictating terms, Harshit Rana and his slower balls were just impossible to hit.

A game in an ICC event and a rivalry with history bursting out of it eventually became so one-sided that its last few moments were dominated by an individual pursuit. Axar Patel turned down an easy two so Kohli could pursue his hundred. The crowd in Dubai loved that. There were 12 runs to get for India's victory and 12 runs to get for their hero's century and they chanted his name over and over. Pakistan were nowhere to be found. Ever since a collapse of 3 for 11 in 19 balls, this game turned pear-shaped for them.



Champions Trophy : Santner assures New Zealand won't take Bangladesh lightly

Rawalpindi, Feb 23 (GNS) New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner assured that they won't take Bangladesh "lightly" in their upcoming Champions Trophy fixture. Santner acknowledged Bangladesh's adeptness in orchestrating a victory against top sides and remained hopeful "it's not us."

New Zealand has been in high spirits since landing in Pakistan to bolster its preparations for the ongoing marquee event. After securing the ODI tri-nation title, the Kiwis maintained their impeccable performance in the subcontinent. They forced the defending champions, Pakistan, to surrender a 60-run defeat.

If the Blackcaps continue to maintain their hot streak of form, they will march into the final four stages of the Champions Trophy. Ahead of facing a depleted Bangladesh side, Santner believes the Tigers maintain balance in their squad despite their dwindling form in the format. Bangladesh have lost their last five ODIs on the trot.

Even though Bangladesh is lining up without its most experienced all-rounder, Shakib Al Hasan, Santner feels they have enough quality players who can attack with the bat and cause trouble with the ball. "Yeah, obviously, we've seen how good Shakib has been for a long time. He's proven that he can perform in all conditions."

They've obviously got Rishad coming in, who's a very good leg spinner. Mehidy has done it. Mahmudullah, if he plays, can offer some good overs as well, so I think their balance is good at the moment," Santner said in the pre-match press conference.

"They have guys who can attack with the bat as well. I mean, Hridoy played a great innings last game, and Jaker Ali has come on and done a lot of good stuff already. So yeah, it's a team we're not taking lightly for sure. We know we've



got to be on, and on these big events, they can upset any team on their day. So Hopefully, it's not us," he added.

Considering Rawalpindi's high-scoring nature, Santner revealed they have a few plans in store for Bangladesh. With Australia chasing down a record 352-run total at the same venue, Santner feels the key to piling up runs on the board will be forging partnerships.

"Yeah, we've got a few plans for Bangladesh, but I think we obviously - we have to wait and see what the wicket does. If it is pretty flat I think it is probably similar stuff to what we've been operating in Karachi."

It's hitting that hard length for a long period of time, and then we know they have some destructive players in their line-up as well. So, I think traditionally, it's quite a high-scoring ground, so we have to be on it. Then, with the bat, we just talk about trying to build partnerships and do that out there," he said.

"Hamstring is okay": Indian skipper Rohit after win over Pakistan in CT 2025

Dubai [UAE], February 23 (GNS) Following his side's ICC Champions Trophy match win against arch-rivals Pakistan, Indian skipper Rohit Sharma revealed that his hamstring is doing okay at the moment amid concerns of him having sustained an injury.

Virat's memorable 82nd international ton, which saw him re-wrote plenty of records, Shreyas Iyer's half-century and fine spells from Kuldeep Yadav and Hardik Pandya helped India secure a win over Pakistan by six wickets at Dubai International Stadium in their ICC Champions Trophy fixture, with the team now having one foot in the semifinals.

But the win did not come without its moments of horror. Rohit seemed to be struggling with his hamstring after celebrating Babar Azam's wicket in the first innings. This also caused him to stay off the field for a while, leaving the leadership in the hands of vice-captain Shubman Gill, before he returned to the field and also for the batting.

Following the match, the Indian captain said, "Hamstring is okay at the moment." Speaking about Virat's century, Rohit said, "Virat loves representing the country, doing what he does the best, which is what he did today. People sitting inside the dressing room are not surprised

with what he did." Rohit also lauded his team's performance with the ball and said that despite knowing that the wicket could get slow while batting, the experienced batting line-up did well to chase down the 242-run total.

"Credit goes to Kuldeep (Yadav), Axar (Patel), (Ravindra) Jadeja all who has played a lot. Rizwan and Saud stitched a good stand, was important not to let the game drift. Not to forget how (Mohammed) Shami, Hardik (Pandya), Harshit (Rana) bowled as well. It was a good performance from the entire unit."

Boys understand what kind of job is required out of them. It is tricky at times because not all will get a bowl. I try to figure out who is creating the most problems for the batters and make decisions," he concluded. Coming to the match between India and Pakistan, Pakistan won the toss and elected to bat first.

Pakistan was off to a fine start, with Babar Azam (23 in 26 balls, with five fours) unleashing some fine drives in the 41-run opening partnership. After two quick wickets, Pakistan was 47/2. Skipper Mohammed Rizwan (46 in 77 balls, with three fours) and Saud Shakeel (62 in 76 balls, with five fours) had a 104-run partnership, but they ate up a lot of deliveries.



Novak Djokovic withdraws from ATP Finals

Belgrade, Feb 23 (GNS) Novak Djokovic won't defend his ATP Finals title after ruling himself out citing an injury, leaving the season-ending event without a member of the Big Three of men's tennis for the first time in 23 years. "I was really looking forward to being there, but due to ongoing injury I won't be playing next week," Djokovic wrote on social media, without specifying what the problem is. "Apologies to those who were planning to see me." The eight-man tournament begins Sunday in Turin, Italy. Djokovic has won the ATP Finals a record

seven times. He beat current No. 1 Jannik Sinner for the title last year. Roger Federer, who announced his retirement in 2022, won the event six times after making his debut in 2002; Rafael Nadal, who is retiring after playing in the Davis Cup this month, was the runner-up twice at the ATP Finals but never won it. Not since 2001 has the tournament been held without at least one of Djokovic, Federer or Nadal. This season also was the first since 2002 without at least one Grand Slam title for a member of that trio. Djokovic finishes the year with a 37-9 record but only



one tournament championship: his first Olympics gold medal.

Mission 2036 Olympics: After months of discussions, India submits 'Letter of Intent' to IOC

New Delhi, Feb 23 (GNS) India has submitted a 'Letter of Intent' to the International Olympic Committee's Future Host Commission, expressing its desire to host the 2036 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

It is the country's first concrete step in its ambitious plan after months of informal dialogue with the IOC. The letter was submitted by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on October 1, according to a source in the sports ministry.

"This monumental opportunity could bring substantial benefits, fostering economic growth, social progress and youth empowerment across the country," the source added. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had first talked about his government's aspiration to host the 2036 Olympics

last year. A decision on the host will not be taken before the IOC elections next year and India will also have to face competition from several other nations such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey, who are positioning themselves as strong contenders to host the sporting spectacle.

However, with the submission of a 'Letter of Intent', the nation has progressed from "Informal Dialogue" to the "Continuous Dialogue" stage of the host election process. In this stage, the IOC conducts a "feasibility study" of the progress of projects associated with the Games in the potential host country. "As part of the Feasibility Assessment, independent sources in a wide-ranging number of areas are taken into consideration, including in human rights, through

Business for Social Responsibility (BSR), and sustainability, through the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)," the IOC states on its official website.

The next phase of the process would be "Targetted Dialogue", which would require the submission of an edition-specific formal bid, which would be assessed by the Future Host Commission. The process would finally end with a host election.

India's plan has been backed by current IOC head Thomas Bach. The last time India hosted an international multi-sport extravaganza was the 2010 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi. But for the 2036 Olympics, Ahmedabad is being seen as a frontrunner to be the host city. India's top sports administrators, including IOA president PT Usha,

were at the Paris Olympics earlier this year to lobby for the country. It is also learnt that India would be pushing for the inclusion of indigenous disciplines if the bid is successful. The Sports Authority of India's Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) has even presented a detailed report on the measures needed for a successful bid to new sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya.

In this document, MOC has identified yoga, kho kho, kabaddi, chess, T20 cricket and squash for inclusion in the Games if the country gets to host the quadrennial extravaganza. However, the IOA is also mired in controversy owing to a tug of war between Usha and the body's Executive Council, which has steadfastly refused to ratify the appointment of her choice for the CEO's



position, Raghuram Iyer. Indian Olympic Association (IOA) president PT Usha insisted that its commitment to host the 2036 Summer Games "remained steadfast" despite the "internal challenges" her organisation has been facing due to her feud with the Executive Council members. "Despite some internal challenges within the IOA, our commitment to hosting the 2036 Summer Games remains steadfast. The IOA remained in continuous contact with the IOC and I am optimistic that India will be viewed as a gracious host," Usha said.